

News from the Motorcycle Action Group (MAG)

MAG brands industry standard emissions calculator unfit for purpose.

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Following repeated claims from Transport for London (TfL) that “individually, motorcycles can be highly polluting”, MAG has demanded that TfL produce evidence to back this claim. TfL stalled for many months before finally claiming that they take information from the National Atmospheric Emissions Inventory.

MAG investigated this “evidence” and discovered that the information from NAEI is, in fact, a modelling calculation; and we can now reveal that this model actually backs our position that pre-Euro 3 motorcycles are not necessarily “highly polluting” and that, by the admission of the software modellers, the figures over-estimate real-world emissions from motorcycles.

TfL has chosen a NOx emissions limit of 0.15g/km for motorcycles, based on the figure for this single pollutant in the Euro 3 motorcycle standard. TfL claim that the evidence for pre-Euro 3 motorcycles being highly polluting is provided by the COPERT 5 data for average motorcycle emissions at an average speed of 30km/h.

The data from COPERT 5 shows that average emissions from pre-Euro 1 <50cc mopeds; pre-Euro 1, Euro 1 and Euro 2 two-strokes; Euro 2 four-strokes 250 – 750cc; pre-Euro 1, Euro 1 and Euro 2 four strokes >750cc, all average less than 0.15g/km. At the same time, the cleanest ULEZ-exempt Euro 6c diesel cars emit 0.21g/km. MAG has also had confirmation from Emisia - the company behind the COPERT modelling software - that their models do not allow for the emissions advantage possessed by motorcycles in terms of filtering through congested traffic.

Studies carried out by the Federation of European Motorcyclists Associations (FEMA) demonstrated that, across 17 major European cities, motorcycles on average reduce journey times by 30% compared with cars. The COPERT modelling can therefore be shown to over-estimate the already low emissions figures for motorcycles by this same percentage.

MAG’s Director of Campaigns & Political Engagement, Colin Brown, stated “This research has led us to a conclusion that has far-reaching implications beyond Sadiq Khan’s London: indeed beyond the UK, to the whole of Europe. Any air quality modelling that relies on the COPERT software is misrepresenting the part that motorcycles play in air quality. No modelling will ever reveal the benefit that modal shift to motorcycles and scooters can play in improving the quality of the air that we all breathe. An opportunity for all is being hidden through the use of faulty assumptions that motorcycles are the same as cars and should be treated in exactly the same way. This is flawed modelling that leads to poor decision-making.

MAG is more than happy to answer any questions about motorcycle emissions, and to work with any authority that genuinely wants to reduce air pollution to correct the modelling and come to workable policies that promote the use of motorcycles and scooters. As we have maintained all along: motorcycles are the solution not the problem.”

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